



if you've been raped...
what to expect
where to turn
what you can do

Information for victims, families and friends from the
DC RAPE CRISIS CENTER



mission statement

The DC Rape Crisis Center is dedicated to creating a world free of sexual violence. The Center works to effect social change through community outreach, education, and legal and public policy initiatives. It helps survivors and their families heal from the aftermath of sexual violence through crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy. Committed to the belief that all forms of oppression are linked, the Center values accessibility, cultural diversity, and the empowerment of women and children.

This pamphlet is a guide for sexual assault survivors and their friends and families. It is designed to help you better understand what to expect from the hospital, police and court systems, and from yourself, your friends and family.

Rape and sexual assault are violent crimes. These crimes can happen to anyone, regardless of age, wealth, race, residence, religion or gender. A woman is raped every five minutes in the U.S. **In each case the rapist chose to rape — the woman did not choose to be raped.**

Remember: It was not your fault. Whatever you did, you did nothing to deserve or provoke it. Sexual violence of any kind is wrong.

if you are a survivor of sexual assault...

- **Go to a safe place.**
- **Report the crime to the police if you want to.** Reporting rape or sexual assault is your choice. If you decide to report, you should not clean yourself at all because you may destroy evidence. Though this may be difficult, do not bathe, shower, douche, wash your hands, brush your teeth, eat or drink anything, smoke, or change or destroy your clothes.
- **Get medical attention.** Whether or not you choose to report to the police, you should get medical attention because you may have been injured or want to be tested for pregnancy or STDs. Also, the medical exam can help to collect/preserve physical evidence for possible criminal prosecution.
- **You are not alone.** Call a friend or call us at **202-333-RAPE...** We can help. We have 24-hour hotline counseling and in-person counseling during daytime hours. We can accompany you to the hospital, police station, and courts to provide information, support and referrals. All of these services are free of charge.

your reactions to sexual assault

Survivors of sexual assault may respond with a wide variety of emotions or changes in behavior. These include:

- anger
- anxiety
- difficulty concentrating
- fear
- shock, numbness
- flashbacks
- guilt or self-blame
- feeling worthless
- irritability
- inability to sleep
- lack of control
- mistrust (perhaps in several areas of your life, including mistrust of your own perceptions of people)
- hypervigilance
- denial
- nightmares
- fear of what other people think
- withdrawal
- change in eating habits
- depression
- tension
- wanting to forget it happened
- embarrassment
- change in relationships with others
- change in sexual activity
- feeling helpless
- feeling unclean

You may experience all of the above reactions, a combination or none of them. Whatever your reaction, it is important for you to feel free to voice your feelings and needs. It is important to understand that your reactions or the emotions you are experiencing are normal responses to a traumatic experience. Talk with close friends, family, or us. We are here for you.

your friends and family's reaction to sexual assault

Friends and family members are often affected when someone who they love is raped or sexually assaulted. They also often want to help you cope with what has happened. Sometimes it's not easy to know what to say or do. The D.C. Rape Crisis Center can assist friends and family members in dealing with their feelings and in helping you.

- 2 Encourage them to call us if they want help.

reporting

You must decide whether to report the assault to the police. We cannot make that decision for you, but we can help you to explore your options.

Survivors choose to report for many reasons:

- they are afraid the rapist will come back
- they want to feel that the rapist cannot just “get away” with the crime
- they want the crime statistics to show how widespread sexual assault is, so that more will be done to prevent it
- they feel it helps them regain a sense of control over the situation
- they want to be eligible for Crime Victim Compensation. **The Crime Victim Compensation Program** provides financial compensation for victims of violent crime in the District of Columbia. For more information call **202-879-4216**.

Survivors choose not to report the crime for many reasons:

- they want to forget the incident
- they fear that the assailant might harm them
- they may know the assailant and feel pressure from peers or family not to report to the police
- they assume they have little evidence and probably won’t get a conviction
- they have had negative experiences with the police or the legal system before
- they feel nervous or ashamed that “everyone” will know what happened
- they feel afraid that they will not be believed.

For a strong legal case, it is best to report the rape right away. However, you can report anytime up to seven years after a rape. A sexual assault exam can be performed up to 96 hours after the assault. After you call the police, several steps are routine. In the District of Columbia a uniformed police officer will take a brief statement from you. The officer will then call the D.C. Sexual Assault Unit of the police department, specially trained detectives who handle sexual assault cases. The telephone number for the **Sexual Assault Unit** is **202-727-3700**. The detective assigned to your case will follow it to completion.

If the police locate a suspect quickly, there is a possibility that you will be asked to identify the suspect at or near the crime scene or the location of where the suspect was stopped if probable cause exists. If the suspect is positively identified as the perpetrator, an arrest shall be made. If the detectives locate a suspect at a later date, you may be

asked to view either a photo array of pictures or attend a line-up of subjects to attempt to identify your perpetrator. You will be asked to provide a detailed description of the attack, which is then typed for you to review. If you have any changes or additions, they should be made before you sign. This will be your formal report.

Victim advocates can provide accompaniment when you go for follow-up interviews with law enforcement. When discussing the assault with the detective, don't be afraid to ask questions about procedures that may seem unclear. Finally, reporting to law enforcement does not guarantee that charges will be filed or the case will be successfully prosecuted.

As mentioned below in the **Medical Needs and Hospital Procedures** section, if you wish to report the rape its best to have an examination to collect evidence. This evidence collection must be done within 96 hours of the assault. After briefly interviewing you, the detective from the Sexual Assault Unit will take you to the hospital and a specially trained nurse or physician will collect the following evidence:

- anything left on your body by the attack (bits of the attacker's clothes, carpet fibers, etc.)
- a vaginal smear to test for the evidence of semen or sperm if you were attacked vaginally
- a rectal smear to test for semen if you were attacked anally
- a record of any bruises, cuts, scratches or internal injuries (photographs may be taken)
- scrapings from under your fingernails if you scratched the assailant
- oral swabs may be taken if you bit the assailant or if he forced his penis into your mouth
- combings and samples of head and public hair to get samples of the attacker's hair
- a whole blood sample

It is important to remember that you have the right to ask any questions throughout the exam and that you may stop the exam at any point.

Police and hospital procedures may differ from state to state. The descriptions presented in this pamphlet will be accurate in many, but not all cases. If you feel that you have not received adequate treatment from the police, courts, medical facilities or social services agencies, contact the Rape Crisis Center. Center staff and volunteers serve as advocates in such situations, giving you support and seeing that your needs are met.

Young sexual assault survivors. Sexual assault crimes involving children are handled by the **Youth and Prevention Services Division of MPD**, not the Sexual Assault Unit. The Division's phone number is: **(202) 576-6737**. Their address is: **1700 Rhode Island Avenue, NE**.

medical needs and hospital procedures

Where to go. If you do not wish to report the sexual assault to the authorities, you should still seek medical care for any injuries, pregnancy, STDs, physical evidence, or possible side effects associated with a drug-facilitated sexual assault. You can receive medical attention from any hospital emergency room, a clinic, or your personal physician. Even if you do not wish to report the sexual assault, call our hotline at **202-333-RAPE (7273)** for counseling and referrals to the hospitals nearest you.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) are specially trained nurses who provide medical attention to sexual assault survivors and collect evidence for court. If you do not receive a SANE exam, you should consider the advantages of receiving the following:

- a pelvic exam to test for internal injuries
- emergency treatment for any injuries
- tests for sexually transmitted diseases, which should be taken again in six weeks to determine if you got them from the rapist
- a pregnancy test, which should be followed up in six weeks by another one to determine if any pregnancy is from the rape
- a whole blood test
- a discussion about what additional treatment or medication you may want such as sedatives or tranquilizers
- emergency contraceptive pills

If you want to press charges, specially trained nurses called Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) are available 24-hours-day at Howard University Hospital to provide medical attention and to collect evidence for court. SANEs use special equipment designed for collecting evidence of sexual assault. The hospital may need to collect your clothing if it was worn during or immediately after the assault. The SANE examination at Howard University Hospital is free of charge. Howard University Hospital is located at 2041 Georgia Ave, NW, Washington, D.C. (see Reporting.)

Medical attention is also available from a private doctor, a clinic, or a hospital emergency room. However, if you want to press charges, other facilities may not have specially trained staff, specially designed

equipment, and may not be able to collect the evidence from your body to help with prosecuting your case. You may also be charged for medical attention at other facilities. Remember, although you may be billed for these services, you may seek reimbursement for these medical expenses from the Crime Victims Compensation Program, if you do not have health insurance.

If you want to press charges, your medical exam must be done in the state where the rape occurred, not where you live. (For example, if you live in D.C. but were assaulted in Virginia, go to a hospital in Virginia and contact the local police there.) There are also medical facilities where you can get a SANE examination in Maryland and Virginia.

If you report a sexual assault to the police or go to Howard Hospital, then an operator will call us. We will meet you at the hospital to provide information and support. Even if you do not want to report the sexual assault or you want to go to a different hospital, call us at **202-333-RAPE (7273)** and we can still offer support.

What to do. If you decide to report, you should not clean yourself at all because you may destroy evidence. Though this may be difficult, do not bathe, shower, douche, wash your hands, brush your teeth, eat or drink anything, smoke, or change or destroy your clothes.

Young sexual assault survivors. Policies for reporting the assault vary from hospital to hospital. Generally, for those survivors under 16, the hospital must report the assault. It is best to call ahead and ask what the policy is at the hospital or clinic you want to go to.

the courts

Criminal Charges

In the United States rape and sexual assault are violations of criminal law. The crime is considered a crime against the State, and the survivor is the witness for the State's case against the attacker. In the criminal case, the survivor does not hire an attorney to prosecute the case. The prosecuting attorney who works to get the attacker convicted works for the State (District of Columbia).

Before a jury trial, a preliminary hearing is held. It is decided if there is enough evidence to continue the case. If the judge believes there is enough evidence against the person they have arrested, there is a grand jury hearing in which the attacker can be indicted (formally charged.) If he is charged, the attacker may be able to plea bargain or the case goes to trial. The survivor must be present at both the preliminary hearing and the grand jury hearing, but the attacker will be present only at the preliminary hearing. The D.C. Rape Crisis Center has counselors who can go with you to court to assist with this process. The U.S. Attorney's Office also has Sexual Assault Victim Advocates that provides supportive services to survivors and helps them to understand the criminal justice system. They provide information about court dates, outcomes of proceedings, and also accompany them to court and remain with them throughout the criminal process.

If your case goes to the final step in this process — the jury trial — the evidence that will be presented to the jury includes:

- **your identification of the rapist if you were able to identify him/her;**
- **your statement (you will be asked to verify the facts contained in the statement you gave to Sexual Assault Unit detectives at the time of the rape and what you said at the preliminary hearing);**
- **medical findings after your physical examination;**
- **anything that shows you did not consent.**

For any sexual assault offense, the two standard defenses the attacker will present are that either 1) the police arrested the wrong person (this is where the hospital evidence of semen, sperm, blood, tissue samples can prove him wrong) or 2) that it was not sexual assault, but that you consented to have sex with him. It can be difficult to prove he

is lying about this, and his defense attorney will be trying to prove that you are lying instead.

Don't get angry at the attacker's attorney while you're on the witness stand; he or she will sometimes make a witness angry on purpose to keep them from thinking straight and you may forget something important.

The more evidence there is in addition to your testimony, the better the chances for a conviction. Neighbors who heard you screaming, evidence of a struggle in the room where you were attacked, bruises, etc. are all evidence.

Civil Charges

You can bring civil charges against the attacker and/or a "third party" who had some responsibility for the rape (for example, a landlord who neglected security.) If you decide to bring a civil suit, you will have to hire an attorney. The purpose of a civil suit is to make the attacker and/or the third party pay for the physical, financial and emotional damage done to you. If you win, you will receive money. There are many considerations involved in bringing civil charges. You should speak with attorneys who have significant experience with these types of cases. You should not hesitate to ask an attorney what experience he or she has had with sexual assault cases. You may also contact the **D.C. Rape Crisis Center (202) 333-7273** for possible referrals.

Stay Away Orders

Stay away orders help assure that an accused assailant will not harass a survivor/witness. The stay away order is issued by the judge at the time bail is set and the detective handling a rape case should inform you if an order has been issued. If not, it is important to ask about it. Any violation of the stay away order should be reported immediately to the detective handling the case. This is the only way that it can be enforced. A number of small infractions or a large infraction will result in the judge revoking bail and issuing an arrest warrant for the accused. This order does not guarantee that the attacker will not harass you; only that he or she will go to jail and stay there if the order is violated.

You don't have to be alone... Call us at 202-333-RAPE. We provide information, support, and referrals. We have 24-hour hotline counseling, companion services, individual counseling, and support groups. We also have a community education department that sponsors self-defense classes and a variety of workshops and presentations on sexual assault.

important phone numbers

Call 911 if you have been sexually assaulted and want to make a police report. You may also contact the **Sexual Assault Unit** of the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department **202-727-3700**.

D.C. Rape Crisis Center
202-333-RAPE (7273)

D.C. Metropolitan Police
Department Sexual Assault Unit
300 Indiana Ave. NW, Room 3042
Washington D.C. 20001
202-727-3700

U.S. Attorney's Office/Domestic
Violence & Sex Offense Unit
202-307-2535

Victim/Witness Assistance Unit
(U.S. Attorney's Office)
202-514-7130

Park Police Communications
202-619-7300

Crime Victim Compensation
Program
202-879-4216

Children's Hospital Child
Protective Division
202-884-4100

Youth and Prevention Services
(cases involving minors)
1700 Rhode Island Ave. NE
Washington, D.C.
202-576-6737

Shelters for Battered Women:

My Sister's Place
202-529-5991

House of Ruth
202-347-0390

Police Contacts

1st District **202-727-4655**
415 4th St. SW

5th District **202-727-4510**
1805 Bladensburg Rd. NE

2nd District **202-282-0070**
3320 Idaho Ave. NW

6th District **202-727-4520**
100 42nd St. NE

3rd District **202-673-6815**
1624 V St. NW

7th District **202-698-1500**
2455 Alabama Ave. SE

4th District **202-576-6745**
6001 Georgia Ave. NW

DC Rape Crisis Center
Hotline Number
202-333-7273



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HOTLINE: 202-333-RAPE

BUSINESS: 202-232-0789

TTY: 202-328-1371

FAX: 202-387-3812